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SHUBHANSHU SHUKLA, AXIOM-4 TEAM ON RETURN PATH TO EARTH

After an 18-day stay at the International Space Station (ISS), astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla and three others set off for return on Monday

WILL SPLASH DOWN OFF U.S. AT 3.01 PM TODAY

Shukla, the second Indian astronaut to travel to space after Rakesh Sharma's 1984 odyssey, will board Dragon spacecraft at 2 pm IST and embark on the return journey two hours later. "Undocking from ISS is scheduled for 4.35 pm IST," Axiom Space said. After a 22.5-hour journey, the crew will splash down off California at 3.01 pm IST on Tuesday

SPACECRAFT WILL BE EXPOSED TO 1,600°C

- Final preparations include detaching the capsule's trunk and orienting the heat shield ahead of atmospheric entry, which will expose the spacecraft to temperatures nearing 1,600 degrees Celsius
- Parachutes will deploy in two stages — first stabilising around 5.7 km altitude followed by main parachutes at roughly two km | P5

₹550 cr

WAS PAID BY ISRO FOR SHUKLA'S TRAVEL TO THE ISS

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People must know value of freedom of speech: SC

SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY
@ New Delhi

OBSERVING that citizens must know the value of freedom of speech and expression, the Supreme Court on Monday said people should observe self-regulation. The bench said it would consider issuing a set of guidelines to regulate offensive posts on social media.

"Citizens must know the value of the fundamental right of freedom of speech and expression. The state can step in, in case of violations. Nobody wants the state to step in," said a two-judge bench comprising justices B V Nagarathna and K V Viswanathan.

The court made these observations after hearing a plea filed by Wazahat Khan, booked in several states, including West Bengal, for his objectionable posts on X against a Hindu deity. Justice Nagarathna said divisive tendencies on social media needs to be curbed, adding it did not mean censorship. "There should be fraternity among citizens," she said.

Khan had filed a police complaint against another social media influencer Sharmistha Panoli for allegedly making communal remarks in a video. On June 23, the court had granted Khan interim protection from coercive action till July 14. The bench on Monday extended the interim protection till the next date of hearing in the case.

The court asked Khan's lawyer to assist in dealing with the larger issue of self-regulation of freedom of speech and expression.

England players celebrate after India's final wicket (Mohammed Siraj) falls in the third Test at Lord's on Monday | PTI

OH LORD'S: TAIL COMES GOOD BUT FALLS 22 SHORT

FIROZ MIRZA @ London

Proud of the way team played: Shubman

LONDON: Shubman Gill said he was proud of the way team put up a fight. He felt that one fifty partnership and Rishabh Pant's first innings run-out made the difference. "Extremely proud it was as close a Test match... I was pretty confident of our chances with plenty of batting left. We needed a couple of 50-run partnerships but we weren't able to get that," Gill said | P15

IT was as if the final day was on slow burn. It was cooking, but slowly; one run at a time across one over after another. Runs were coming in ones. The boundaries had dried up. Yet, the capacity crowd kept egging the players. This was Test cricket garbed in its finest orb.

It was getting increasingly irritating for Ben Stokes and Co as Ravindra Jadeja and Nos. 10 and 11 — Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj — were trying to enact one of modern cricket's greatest heists. What looked improbable at lunch looked promising by tea.

It is not always that a crowd cheers a leave or a forward defensive. Not always do tail-enders play over 80 balls. On Monday, they just did that and brought India closer to England's target of 193. While Bumrah and Siraj were being cheered loudly for their defence, the Bharat Army were chanting 'Oh Ravi Jadeja', a song to the tune of the 'Seven Nation Army' they have composed for the all-rounder.

Jadeja played 181 balls for his unbeaten 61 while Bumrah (5) and Siraj (4) faced 54 and 30 balls. All together, they played 212 legal deliveries. Like the Test, even the end was slow. Siraj blocked a Bashir's delivery but the revs on the ball took it to the leg stump. A feather touch dislodged one bail. Jadeja looked on helplessly from the other end.

The hosts, exhausted and forlorn until then, erupted in joy. Just like they had done at the same venue six years ago when England were crowned world champions by the barest of margins. At the centre of that win was Ben Stokes. The England skipper was the beating heart of this latest win as well. On the evidence of London, Manchester could be another cracker. P15

Time to address de-escalation: EAM to Wang Yi

Jaishankar meets his Chinese counterpart, urges lifting of restrictive trade practices

JAYANTH JACOB @ New Delhi

IN a firm and forward-looking message during talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Monday said that lasting peace along the India-China border remains the bedrock for restoring strategic trust and advancing bilateral relations.

Jaishankar, who is in China to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) foreign ministers meeting, told his Chinese counterpart that recent progress in resolving border friction and maintaining tranquility helped ease tensions, laying the groundwork for broader normalisation.

"We have made good progress in the past nine months for the normalisation of our bilateral relations. It is a result of the resolution of friction along the border and our ability to maintain peace and tranquility there. This is the fundamental basis for mutual strategic trust and for smooth development of bilateral relations," he said.

"It is now incumbent on us to address other aspects related to the border, including de-escalation," Jaishankar said.

"Our bilateral relationship requires that we take a far-seeing approach to our ties," Jaishankar said.

The minister, who is visiting China for the first time after the 2020 border clashes, said over the past year, both sides have made tangible progress toward normalising ties, thanks to resumed dialogue and increasing high-level engagement. "In recent times, the two of us have had several opportunities to meet at international events and carry out strategic communication. It is our expectation that this will now become a regular feature and take place in each other's countries," he said.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi

Need to maintain momentum in ties

Jaishankar referred to the 2024 meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping in Kazan, saying "Since then, the relationship has been gradually moving in a positive direction. Our responsibility is to maintain that momentum."

Jaishankar highlighted the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two nations that the two countries are marking this year. He also acknowledged the resumption of the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra after a five-year pause, expressing gratitude to China for its cooperation.

Touching on trade and people-to-people engagement, Jaishankar called for the removal of barriers that hinder mutual growth. "Measures towards normalising people-to-people exchanges can foster mutually beneficial cooperation. It is also essential that restrictive trade practices and other roadblocks are avoided," he said. Certain export control measures have caused unease in India in recent times.

FARM CRISIS

Supply from China cut, state farmers face DAP shortage

ASHWINI M SRIPAD @ Bengaluru

WITH China cutting down the supply of Di-ammonium Phosphate (DAP) to India due to a host of factors, including political brinkmanship, farmers in the state are facing a fertiliser shortage at the peak kharif season.

The state agriculture department and experts are urging farmers to use Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Potassium instead of DAP.

Karnataka needs 4 lakh tonnes of DAP for the ongoing kharif season and another 2 lakh tonnes for rabi. The Centre supplies DAP to states based on their average use for the last three years. The DAP quantity to be supplied for the kharif season is allocated in January and for rabi in July. This year, the Centre allocated 4 lakh tonnes to Karnataka, but so far only 1.89 lakh tonnes hase been supplied.

Agriculture department sources said they had a stock of around 76,000 tonnes from last year. "We have been able to distribute 1.9 lakh tonnes so far, including from the last year's stock. For rabi, allocation will be in July-end. We don't know how much we will get," said sources.

An official said India imports 48% of its annual DAP requirement from other countries, mostly China. Apart from political reasons, China's reduction in exports is also because it is using some ingredients of DAP for other products. The remaining requirement is met with production from within the India. But for this, India depends on Russia and other countries for phosphoric compounds, the cost of which has gone up as ships have to avoid the Karachi route after the Indo-Pak conflict, said an official requesting anonymity.

AB Patil, President of Indian Institute of Agricultural Technology, said they are insisting and encouraging farmers to use NPK (nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium) fertilisers. P4

Last-ditch efforts on to save Indian nurse

JAYANTH JACOB @ New Delhi

AS the execution date of Indian nurse Nimisha Priya draws near, intense efforts are underway to convince the victim's family to accept blood money, the only legal route to saving her life under Yemeni law.

Nimisha Priya, a native of Kerala, is reportedly scheduled to be executed on July 16 for the alleged 2017 murder of her Yemeni business partner Talal Abdo Mahdi.

"All efforts are on to save Nimisha Priya," her lawyer Subhash Chandran told this paper. "In the latest efforts, through the intervention of influential Sunni Muslim cleric Kanthapuram AP Aboobacker Musliyar, we have reached out to one of the family members, as well as some local authorities and religious leaders. We are trying our best so that the family accepts the blood money and the Kerala nurse is spared from death row," he said.

Nimisha Priya

According to sources close to the negotiations, Musliyar —who holds the title of Grand Mufti and is officially known as Sheikh Abubakr Ahmad — has stepped in personally and is making "all possible efforts" to open a channel of reconciliation. He has held talks with religious authorities in Yemen, who in turn are in contact with the victim's family.

"Right now, the only hope is that the family accepts the blood money," said a source familiar with the developments. While there are still "grey areas", the negotiation team is working with the understanding that July 16 could be the execution date.

An office has been opened at Musliyar's headquarters in Kerala to coordinate these efforts. However, there has been no official confirmation from the victim's family.

Earlier today, the Centre informed the Supreme Court that it has limited diplomatic levers to intervene in the matter. Appearing before a bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta, Attorney General R Venkataramani said, "the government is trying its best..."

The fate of Priya now hinges on the willingness of the victim's family to accept the blood money offer.

J&K CM SCALES BURIAL GATE TO PAY TRIBUTE

A defiant Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Monday scaled the gates of the Naqshband Sahib graveyard to pay tribute to 22 people killed by the Dogra army in 1931, and said he was subjected to "physical grappling" but was not to be stopped or deterred | P10

EXPRESS READ

Retail inflation drops to 2.1% in June

New Delhi: Retail inflation declined to over six-year low of 2.1% in June, nearing the RBI's comfort zone, on subdued prices of food items driven by widespread monsoon | P13

Trump gives Russia 50 days to end war

Washington: President Donald Trump on Monday said he would punish Russia with tariffs if there isn't a deal to end the war in Ukraine within 50 days | P12

DGCA: Check Boeing fuel switches in 7 days

New Delhi: The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Monday asked all airlines flying Boeing aircraft to inspect their switches before July 17 | P9

Not informed about bridge opening, CM writes to PM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

CHIEF Minister Siddaramaiah has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, complaining about him not being informed about the inauguration of state's longest cable bridge at Sagar in Shivamogga that was opened by Union Minister for Highways and Transport Nitin Gadkari on Monday.

The CM stated that the state government places on record its protest against such non-cooperative action. "I do hope that all central ministers will be strongly advised to refrain from such discordant acts in the future," he said.

The CM stated that organising any programme in the state without consulting the state government violates the protocol. It is also unusual that the name of a former chief minister was mentioned before the names of deputy chief minister, Speaker of the Karnataka Legislative Assembly and chairman of state Legislative Council.

The programme was held in spite of the state government expressing its disagreement. This shows sheer arbitrariness and defies the very spirit of cooperative federalism, which has always steered the Centre and state relations as per the mandate of our Constitution, he added.

The CM said the foundation stone laying function, dedicating five National Highway projects of 88 km with an investment of over Rs 2,000 crore, was held on Monday by the ministry of road transport and highways at Sagar in Shivamogga district.

CONTINUED ON P4

LEGEND IN HER OWN LIFETIME

Doe-eyed beauty who held audience in thrall

A SHARADHAA @ Bengaluru

LEGENDARY actor B Saroja Devi, the doe-eyed 'Abhinaya Saraswati' who held the southern film industries in thrall, passed away at her residence in Bengaluru early on Monday due to age-related health issues. She was 87. Born on January 7, 1938, in Bengaluru, Saroja Devi was encouraged by her parents, especially by her father, a police officer, to learn dance, which eventually opened the doors to the silver screen, and she made her debut in national award-winning Kannada film *Mahakavi Kalidasa* in 1955.

In a career spanning seven decades and over 200 films, she ruled hearts across languages —Tamil, Kannada, Telugu, and Hindi. While being active in multiple languages was quite normal in those days, the hallmark of her career was her stellar success in each of these industries. She had an enviable number of superhits with repeated pairings opposite the legends of various industries, including MG Ramachandran, Sivaji Ganesan, and Gemini Ganesan in Tamil, Dr Rajkumar in Kannada, and N T Rama Rao in Telugu.

PADMA BHUSHAN IN 1992

Saroja Devi was presented the Lifetime Achievement Award by the union government in 2008, as part of India's 60th Independ-ence Day celebrations. She was a recipient of the Padma Bhushan (1992) and Padma Shri (1969)

But it was in Tamil cinema that she shone the brightest, particularly alongside M G Ramachandran (MGR), the iconic superstar, former CM and founder of the AIADMK, who considered her his 'lucky mascot'. They acted in 48 films together and their very first film, *Nadodi Mannan* (1958), catapulted the 'Kannadathu Paingili' (Kannada's parrot) to superstardom overnight. Some of their other films like *Anbe Vaa* (1966) and *Arasa Kattalai* (1967) have been celebrated as cult classics. Her well-known films with legendary Sivaji Ganesan included *Bhaaga Pirivinai* (1959), *Palum Pazhamum* (1961), and *Aalayamani* (1962). She had starred with Sivaji Ganesan in 22 movies.

Her notable works in other languages included *Amarashilpi Jakanachari*, *Bhagyavantharu*, *Babruvahana*, and *Katha Sangama* in Kannada.

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